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## Supporting over 40 Years of Excellence in Community Services

November 2009

### Farmers Bank and Trust Grant

First Step Recycling has received a \$25,000 boost to help with job creation, repairs and new equipment thanks to the efforts of a local bank. The Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLBank) of Topeka awarded the grant to Farmers Bank and Trust, N.A.

"We discussed many community organizations and businesses, and thought Sunflower's recycling project best matched the grant application requirements," said Travis Thompson, Farmers vice president.

First Step employs 59 people and eight new jobs will be created. The grant also will help with the repair of three trucks; repair of one forklift and replacement of another; and purchase of four smaller shredders.



Standing from left to right: Don Brening, Travis Thompson, Gene Dikeman and Jim Johnson tour the confidential shredding section of First Step Recycling. Brening, Thompson and Dikeman represent Farmers Bank and Trust, N.A., which was awarded a grant to help First Step. Johnson represents Sunflower Diversified Services, which owns and operates First Step.

First Step currently serves more than 200 businesses with door-to-door pick-up services. In addition, collection centers in area communities bring collected materials to First Step.

Creating and retaining jobs at First Step is one of the many important roles Sunflower plays. With collecting, sorting and processing, persons with even the most severe physical disabilities can work and earn their own paychecks.

Recyclers, Farmers Bank and FHLBank should be commended for helping First Step expand its reach.

Recyclers protect the earth's resources and support people with disabilities who want to control their lives. We are grateful that Farmers Bank chose Sunflower and that FHLBank selected us for this wonderful grant.

### Hoisington Labor Day Parade

Sunflower's creativity and community spirit were rewarded at this year's Hoisington Labor Day Parade when our staff and clients showcased Kansans on the waiting list for services.

Our attractive float, which raised awareness about the Invisible Kansans Campaign, received third-place honors, out of about 150 entries.

The Invisible Kansans represent the 4,000 people on the waiting list for developmental-disability services. Those who manned the float wore their blue-and-white "Can you see me now" t-shirts that were color-coordinated with the parade entry.

Jennifer Welsch, community employment specialist, deserves a round of applause for taking the lead in designing and building Sunflower's float. She and her husband, and the rest of the team should be commended for representing Sunflower, the people we serve and the people we want to serve.

They are a class act.

## **Autism Team**

The thought of autism is so frightening that many parents ignore the disorder's indicators and hope they go away. Cathy Estes, our Early Education Center coordinator, wants to change all that and has established an autism team.

The EEC provides early intervention for autism, including sensory issues, speech and social/emotional concerns. Children respond positively to this intervention, often learning to overcome many or all of the difficulties associated with autistic tendencies.

The word "curable" is being used with early detection, and if screenings indicate autism, the EEC refers families to a developmental pediatrician.

Autism is a social/emotional condition because its characteristics indicate a child does not develop environmental or personal relationships successfully; characteristics can be detected in babies as young as 6-10 months old. For example, a baby may not snuggle or respond to facial expressions.

The stereotyped behaviors of "true autism" are rarely seen before age 2. The most obvious are a lack of social interaction, repetitive patterns such as rocking, spinning or hand flapping. Children develop narrow, repetitive interests, tending to shut out their environment and lose some already-learned skills.

Cathy understands parents being unnerved but emphasized they should have their children screened immediately.

The autism team consists of Cathy, who is one of only 10 infant mental health mentors in Kansas; Susan Keeler, speech/language pathologist; Jessica Nelson, early childhood special education teacher; and Ruth Johnson, occupational therapy assistant.

For more information, call 620-792-4087.

## **Chris Cakes/ATV Raffle**

Sunflower raised approximately \$10,000 as the result of our pancake feed and Polaris 4-wheeler give-away. Congratulations to Matt Mongeau of LaCrosse, who won the Polaris that was donated by Straub International. It has a retail value of \$7,000 and we raised about \$8,000.

The other \$2,000 was raised at the Chris Cakes pancake feed, which has become an extremely popular annual event. More than 640 people were served.

We are grateful to the individuals and businesses that contributed. All the proceeds will go directly to

the special needs of people with developmental disabilities.

Even though Sunflower is supported, in part, by tax dollars, we have to rely on the community's generosity to fill in the financial gaps. Fortunately, the people we serve know they can count on central Kansans.



Matt Mongeau of LaCrosse receives the key to the new 4-wheeler he won at the recent Chris Cakes pancake feed. Ron Straub, left, of Straub International, and Jim Johnson, Sunflower executive director, congratulate Matt.

## **Incredible Years**

Sharon Mackey and Jonelle Freeman have rounded out the team at Incredible Years Preschool, bringing special perspectives to the classroom.

Mackey has experience working with special education students with behavioral and emotional challenges, which helps at Incredible Years when a child is facing similar issues.

Our preschool is for everyone; normally developing children, as well as those with social/emotional concerns are welcome. This is one of the reasons Sharon is pleased to be here.

Jonelle is continuing her education in special education and early childhood development in the birth-to-8 age range. She said Incredible Years is the perfect place to meet the needs of a diversified classroom.

Nine students are enrolled in the preschool's Monday/Wednesday classes for 3-and-a-half to 5 year olds; there are 13 in the Tuesday/Thursday sessions for 2-and-a-half to 3-and-a-half year olds. Each has the capacity for 18.

The curriculum includes social/emotional, cognitive and physical development; language and communication skills; and arts and sciences. We are hearing wonderful feedback from families about the classroom activities.

Six Incredible Years students are on scholarship and private donations are needed to rebuild this fund. The cost for one year, which includes three semesters, is \$830. We are so grateful for a March of Dimes grant, as well as donations from individuals and the Kiwanis Club. Now, we hope to build the scholarship fund with more private donations.

For more information, call 620-792-4087.



Jonelle Freeman, left, and Sharon Mackey, right, guide Jakeb Cauthon and Zoie Pierce in an activity about colors and counting at Incredible Years Preschool.

**These personal accomplishments are possible because of your support.**

When Justice Messersmith was still in the womb, she was introduced to alcohol, methamphetamine and cigarettes. Her mother, Melissa, sought treatment for her addictions, and Justice was referred to our Early Education Center by Health in Pregnancy at age 11 months.



Justice was within her developmental age range but the risk factors were a big concern. Her mom and our professional team determined Justice would benefit from the EEC's early intervention program.

Since our specialists began to provide services, Justice has continued to thrive and develop. Melissa has completed her GED and plans to become a certified nurse's aide. She has gained confidence in her parenting skills and interacts regularly with the EEC staff to further help her daughter.

Justice is now happy and thriving at 19 months and meeting her developmental milestones – much to her mother's delight.

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Brandon Marlow has had difficulties over the years adjusting to new situations. Meeting new people and interacting with them was not easy.

Now, however, Brandon is enjoying two brand new environments and is exceeding expectations.



Brandon, who is autistic, recently moved from his parents' home, finished school and began working at Sunflower's Manufacturing Plant. He has made huge strides in this transition into adult life.

At home and at work, his adjustment to new faces and personalities has been remarkable. Brandon has done amazingly well in working successfully with the Sunflower staff at his new home and on the job, as well as with his co-workers.

Brandon is a perfect example of a young man who simply needed guidance in what is expected of him. He learned that he must make adjustments to his new, more independent life, and all the responsibilities that come with it.

Our staff is so pleased to have the opportunity to collaborate with Brandon. We look forward to being a part of his continuing journey into responsible, productive adulthood.

**Best of Great Bend Award**

For the second consecutive year, Sunflower was selected for the Best of Great Bend Award. The U.S. Local Business Association recognized our non-profit agency in the Disability Services category.

"Nationwide, just over one percent of the 2008 award recipients qualified as 2009 winners," noted Ashley Carter, selection committee chair. "Sunflower's selection as this year's winner is a reflection of the hard work of its staff and the many people who have supported its mission and contributed to this success.

"Sunflower should be congratulated by the community," Carter added. "The agency is in an elite group."

The USLBA "Best of Local Business" award program recognizes outstanding local businesses and agencies throughout the country, Carter explained.

Jim Johnson, Sunflower executive director, noted that after 43 years of providing services to people with developmental disabilities, the commitment to individuals and families hasn't changed.

The entire staff should be recognized for their commitment. They provide high-quality services and see the rewards every day, and it is great for them to be honored by a national association.

# **Contributions**

**July 2009 through September 2009**

The following individuals and businesses have contributed to the support of Sunflower's programs and special projects. Dollars received by the Foundation are gifted on a quarterly basis to supplement local, state and federal funding.

Our supporters and partners are very important to us, and we appreciate the involvement of each and every one. If you know of anyone we have missed, or if we need to update our information, please let us know.

## **Quarterly Newsletter**

A & F Enterprises  
Karl & Reta Brack  
Mary Brown  
Creative Touch  
Delores Fundenberger  
Alfred Hammersmith  
Caroline Hoffman  
Jim & Judy Johnson  
Leons Midwest Appliance Service  
Dennis & Kathy Pechanec  
Mi Mi Raffelock  
Lawrence & Pauline Schneider  
Durward Smith  
Warren Brothers

## **Gifts**

Eagle Lanes Ellinwood  
Mrs. Leo Hayden  
Leo Herrman  
Jean Pringle  
Darwin Siefkes

## **Chris Cakes**

Adams Brown Beran & Ball  
American State Bank  
Anderson Financial  
Darrell & Mary Bieker  
Eldridge Fencing  
Francis Financial  
Great Bend Farm Equipment  
L & M Contractors  
M & F Plumbing, Heating & Air  
Marmie Ford  
Marmie Motors  
Medical Park Pharmacy  
Mobile Radio Service  
Dennis & Jann Sherman  
Stueder Contractors  
Sunflower Bank  
Taco Hut

## **Aviary - in memory of**

### **Deborah Smith**

June White

## **Nadine Amerine Memorial**

Randy Cobb

## **Hans Anderson Memorial**

Randy Cobb

## **Lloyd DeWeese Memorial**

Terry & Connee Beaver  
Frank & Cathy Estes  
Lois Payne

## **Jerry Dundas Memorial**

Randy Cobb

## **Erma Estes Memorial**

Katherine George

## **Mona Ewing Memorial**

Randy Cobb

## **David Hammond Memorial**

Mary Ann Johnson

## **Eddie Herres Memorial**

Randy Cobb

## **Carolyn Isern Johnson Memorial**

Randy Cobb

## **Hugh Mauch Memorial**

Randy Cobb

## **Sunrise Campaign**

Lavina Scheuerman



**Sunflower offers the services of an estate planning consultant, at no cost or obligation. Please contact us for details.**

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